

## Environmental Exposures in the Context of Health Equity

Jacqueline E. Taylor, REHS, MPA  
Director, Environmental Protection Branch

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### What is Health Equity?



Health is shaped by the community conditions in which we live, learn, work, play and worship. These conditions include:

 Good schools	 A thriving and inclusive economy
 Safe and supportive neighborhoods	 Strong social connections
 Quality healthcare	 Sustainable, healthy environments

Health equity is when everyone has access to the conditions needed for optimal health and well-being.

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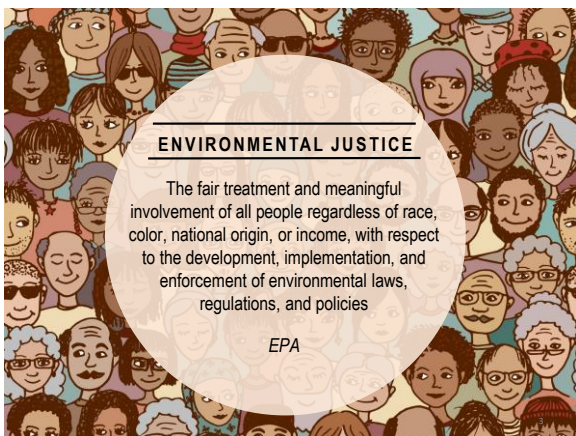
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**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies

EPA

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**Role of Public Health** 

- To ensure the health and safety of the community and protect public health
- Advocate for regulatory change
- Direct regulatory authority and enforcement powers such as in landfill regulation and drinking water regulation
- A facilitator or catalyst to bring the responsible parties to the table
- Increasing, Public Health is expanding its role to address environmental issues that have a nexus to health equity.

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**Environmental Exposures** 

**Case Studies from the Field**



- Description of the Incident/Situation
- Community Demographics
- Authority and Enforcement
- Outcomes/Next Steps

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**Case Study Focus Areas** 

- Exide Lead-Acid Battery Smelter – 2015 – on going
- Pomona Environmental Justice Initiative – 2018
- Sativa LA County Water District Incident – 2018
- CA Lead Paint Litigation Outcome - 2012-2018

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### Exide Battery Recycling Plant

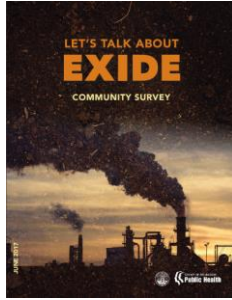


Lead acid battery smelter in operation since 1922

Largest west of the Rockies

Crushed, melted and processed 25,000 batteries a day - 24/7

Never properly permitted



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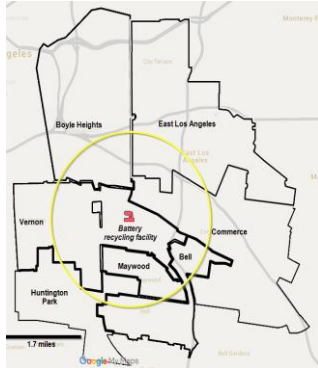
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### The Affected Community



- Five cities and the Co Unincorporated area
- 90% Latino
- Working class/low income
- Mix of industrial uses
- Densely populated 10,000 hm in radius



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### Authority and Enforcement



- 2012 Health Risk Assessment SCAQMD
- Closed by Dept of Toxic Substances Control March 2015
- County actions
  - Community wide survey
  - Rapid field testing/soil
  - Education/outreach
  - Health screenings
  - Advocacy State/Federal



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**Outcomes/Next Steps** 

Costly removal of lead-contaminated soil from thousands of homes

Most extensive cleanup of its kind in CA and among the largest ever conducted in the nation.



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**Pomona EJ Initiative** 

In 2013 the California Environmental Protection Agency established the Environmental Justice (EJ) Task Force

In 2018 the EJ Task Force selected the city of Pomona for a focused environmental enforcement and regulatory compliance initiative

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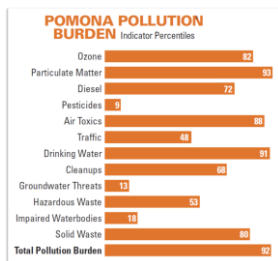
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**City of Pomona - High Pollution Burden** 

- High levels of pollution
- Only 8% of areas in CA have a higher cumulative pollution burden
- Population is more susceptible to the negative health effects associated with this pollution burden



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Authority and Enforcement



Conducted inspections at  
9 Solid Waste Facilities  
51 Waste Tire Facilities



Community input/site selection

Most sites in compliance

Unpermitted facility/odor  
management system not in use



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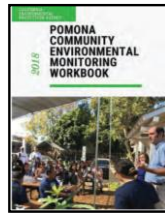
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Outcomes / Next Steps



- EJ Task Force held public meetings  
Shared results of inspections  
Provided resources and agency contacts
- Provided training to help residents  
identify, document, and report  
violations
- Improved coordination & collaboration  
between agencies



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Sativa Drinking Water Incident



Description of Problem

- Particulates in the tap water
- Discolored tap water
- On-going/persistent
- Residents mistrust of the water quality



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### Community Descriptors



- Located in Willowbrook unincorporated area and part of City of Compton (SD2)
- 6,320 population, 1,661 service connections, poorly maintained system
- Disadvantaged community status - low income
- People of color

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### Authority and Enforcement



- Began to closely monitor the situation
- Collaborated with State Water Board
- Collected and tested water samples at known discolored water sites. All samples were negative for bacteria
- Implemented a public education and outreach program and
- Facilitated the availability of bottled water for affected residents



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### Outcomes/Next Steps



- Health Equity position - “No one should be expected to drink discolored water”



- System taken over by DPW, while a permanent owner/operator is found
- Advocate for regulatory change at the State level

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### Lead-Based Paint Litigation



- Lead paint is the top source of lead poisoning for children in LA Co
- 3000+ children elevated blood lead levels each year
- 1978, lead-based paints were banned for use in housing, but houses built prior are likely to contain lead-based paint
- Often low income and people of color most affected



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### California Lead Paint Litigation Outcome



- 2012 CA won lawsuit against lead paint manufacturers \$1.15 billion - appealed by industry
- 2017 Ruling upheld by CA Court of Appeals and CA Supreme Court. Judgement reduced to \$409M
- 2018 US Supreme Court rejected appeals and affirmed lower court ruling
- \$200M for LA Co for abatement programs – 4 years



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### Next Steps



According to Rosner and Markowitz *“this is an enormous victory for PH in CA and potentially for the nation”...the supreme court victory “established a principle that industries are responsible for cleaning up environments that threaten health before people are harmed. If states can show that companies historically knew of the dangers their products posed, the companies are accountable in terms of paying for the necessary environmental remediation.”*

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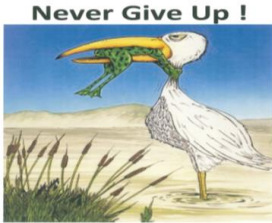
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Jacqueline E. Taylor



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